

## Contributions

### Bible Study and Its Relation to the Christian Life and the Work of the Church

A SYMPOSIUM BY

J. Allen Miller, W. D. Furry and O. F. Yoder.

No subject can be of greater interest. It is timely as well. Today more than ever the Bible is studied. And yet the great masses are very ignorant of its teachings.

This is a vital subject for the life of the individual Christian can never be what it ought or must be without knowing the Word of God. The life and work of the church is thwarted and dwarfed because God's Word is not known and honored. It is vital to the nation and the race for neither can long survive, be virile and dominant, and be ignorant of God's way with nations.

The Bible. This is preeminently the Book for study. It can not be known without study. No book of any worth can be. The Bible, it must be borne in mind, is no ordinary Book even when compared with others as a mere Book. The most powerful minds have been staggered at its unsearchable depths of wisdom and truth.

A Book that touches the profoundest depths of man's need, and discourses upon themes of supreme conduct and eternal destiny, and moves among men of all ranks, among whom it is known, as an irresistible and authoritative royal mandate—such a Book I repeat can not be known without study.

It is the Word of God. It must be heard. Tho it come in whatever tongue it may it speaks a universal language. It speaks its message to the souls of men if it speak at all to them. It is worth our "meditation all the day long" just to hear his voice speak to us.

Bible Study. Mark these words. It means more than mere Bible reading. Much of our Bible reading is not even good reading,—it is so desultory and lifeless. With how little force and intelligence the Bible speaks to those who even read it much may be seen at least in part by their unchanged life and soulless experience.

Study the Bible. The Bible I say, is to be studied. Much of our so-called study is only about the Bible. Take Biblical Introduction, and Archaeology, and Chronology, and Geography,—all very good and very necessary in their place; or take textual and critical work and go as far as the "Higher Critics,"—and this too has a legitimate place but my contention is that these are mere externals, things well enough to know about the Bible but are not really study of the Word itself. The Word is too often altogether submerged. These things are the mere machinery. What the soul wants and needs is the living water from the depths of the well; the sweet bread of life from the golden grain. The soul in quest of a sin-

cleansing Redeemer does not raise any critical questions about Isa. 53. Untold passages of our Bible are heart-treasures, tried and proved of sterling worth, and no criticism can rob them of their soul comforting, life-giving power. Who ever thinks of looking for the date of a shining twenty-dollar gold piece or of raising the question as to the place of its coinage? It is the sterling gold we want.

Study. Critical Bible study has its rightful place. I do not disparage it. It is a source of great profit to me. But first, and for the most part all of us, must take our English Bibles and just seek to learn therefrom the will of God. How can we do this? Try this way. Take a verse or a sentence or perhaps a paragraph. Fix the attention upon it. Make it your own. Analyze it. Paraphrase it. Reconstruct it. Give it its rightful place in your thought. Master its fact and then,—wait. Wait for the Spirit's message in the Word to your soul. The Scripture is not yours until its truth is brought to life in you. Read—meditate—pray—until the Spirit takes of the things of the Word of God before you and speaks them to your soul.

And all this has an intensely practical side to it. The Christian life and the work of the church both in their character and their effectiveness depend upon the knowledge possessed of the Word of God.

It is inexcusable and a sin for a people who boast of being Bible-alone Christians to be ignorant of the Word of God. For a people to be ignorant of the Bible and then boast of loyalty to its teachings is culpable disloyalty.

The highest type of the Christian life is possible only where the Master's life and teachings are best known and appreciated. The spirit and genius of the supreme life must be clearly discerned to be appropriated.

Duty and obligation fulfill a large function in the true Christian life. These grow out of relations. The true relations of this life must therefore be known in their fullest possible expression. The Christian can only know them as he knows the will of God concerning himself.

God is only truly and intelligently worshiped and sincerely loved as he is known. To know the Father we must know the Son. We can know either only as we know their Word.

It was St. Chrysostom who said: "The cause of all our evils is our not knowing the Scriptures." I think I shall close by saying that the cause of all our weakness in service,

and all the church's ineffectual and inefficient work, and all her failure to do her work to the greatest glory of God, and her slowness of heart to believe the plan of God and seek to execute it is the church's ignorance of his Word.

J. A. MILLER.

The natural world is a type of the spiritual. The laws of each are not analogous but continuous. There are not two worlds,—there is only one world, partly seen, partly unseen and its evolution is simple and direct. Between the seen and the unseen, the known and the unknown there is a fundamental harmony. The natural is no longer opposed to the spiritual—a surface of recoil to which the individual must die. It is absurd and Manicheistic to postulate two worlds of truth in everlasting opposition. Science is not diabolical and theology sacred, but both are sacred and there is no ground for conflict between them. The one needs the conclusions of the other and each supplements and completes the other. *Alterum alterius auxilio eget.* Science in devout hands is the best propadentics to theology. From the seen thought can be projected into the unseen. The known throws light upon the unknown, but by no means the unknowable world. Jesus sets forth the laws and methods of the spiritual world in terms of the natural. He seldom spoke without making use of material illustrations. "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow!" "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed." "A sower went forth to sow." The reader will readily recall others. With such illustrations, Jesus taught, instructively, beautifully and completely, the nature and growth of the Christian religion in the individual and the race.

The tree very often and very appropriately is made to illustrate the life of the Christian. It has a life that is seen and a life that is unseen; so has the Christian. In a sense all life is unseen since the seen is but the manifestation of the unseen. The tree has trunk and branches without which its inner life could not be manifested. It sends its roots and rootlets deep into the ground which give it strength, beauty and usefulness. The health and growth of the tree depend upon nutrition. The soil must be fertile that feeds the sap of the tree, and into this rich soil the tree must be deeply rooted.

All this can be applied to the Christian's life and growth. The Christian life must be rooted and grounded in the truth. The truth is the word of God. In it are contained great fundamental principles and doctrines that give strength to the spiritual life and without which Christianity becomes a passing sentiment or a changing emotion. The life of the Christian must be deeply rooted in the Word or it will be lacking in strength, beauty and usefulness.

The Bible is the soil in which faith grows. All else is desert land. There is no food for the soul in pagan mythology, or East Indian vagaries that have come in profusion